THE FOUR NUTRIMENTS OF BEING

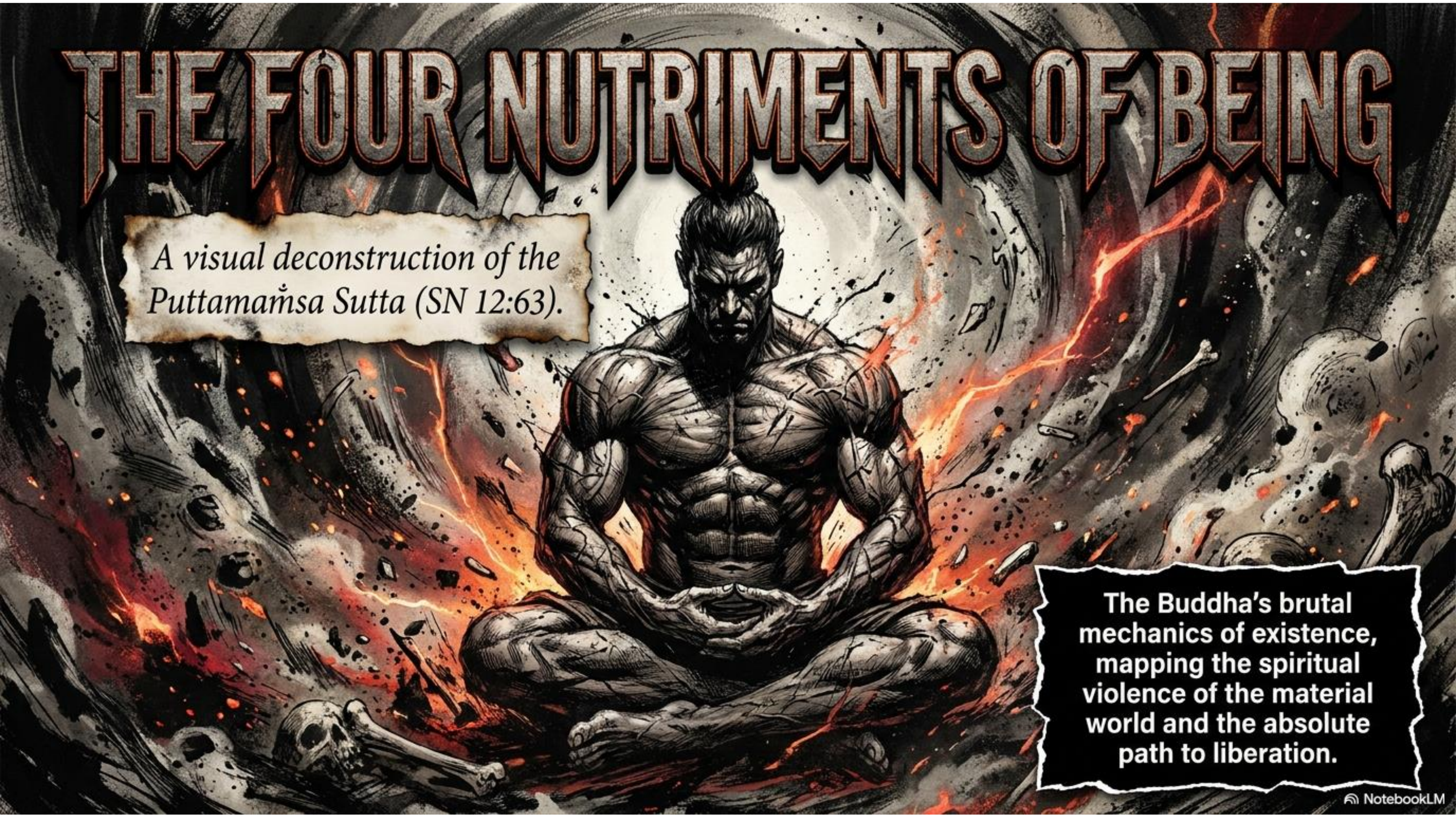
A Visual Exegesis of the Puttamaṁsa Sutta (SN 12:63)

Decoding the visceral metaphors of existence, craving, and liberation.

NotebookLM

THE FOUR NUTRIMENTS OF BEING

A visual deconstruction of the Puttamaṁsa Sutta (SN 12:63).



The Buddha's brutal mechanics of existence, mapping the spiritual violence of the material world and the absolute path to liberation.

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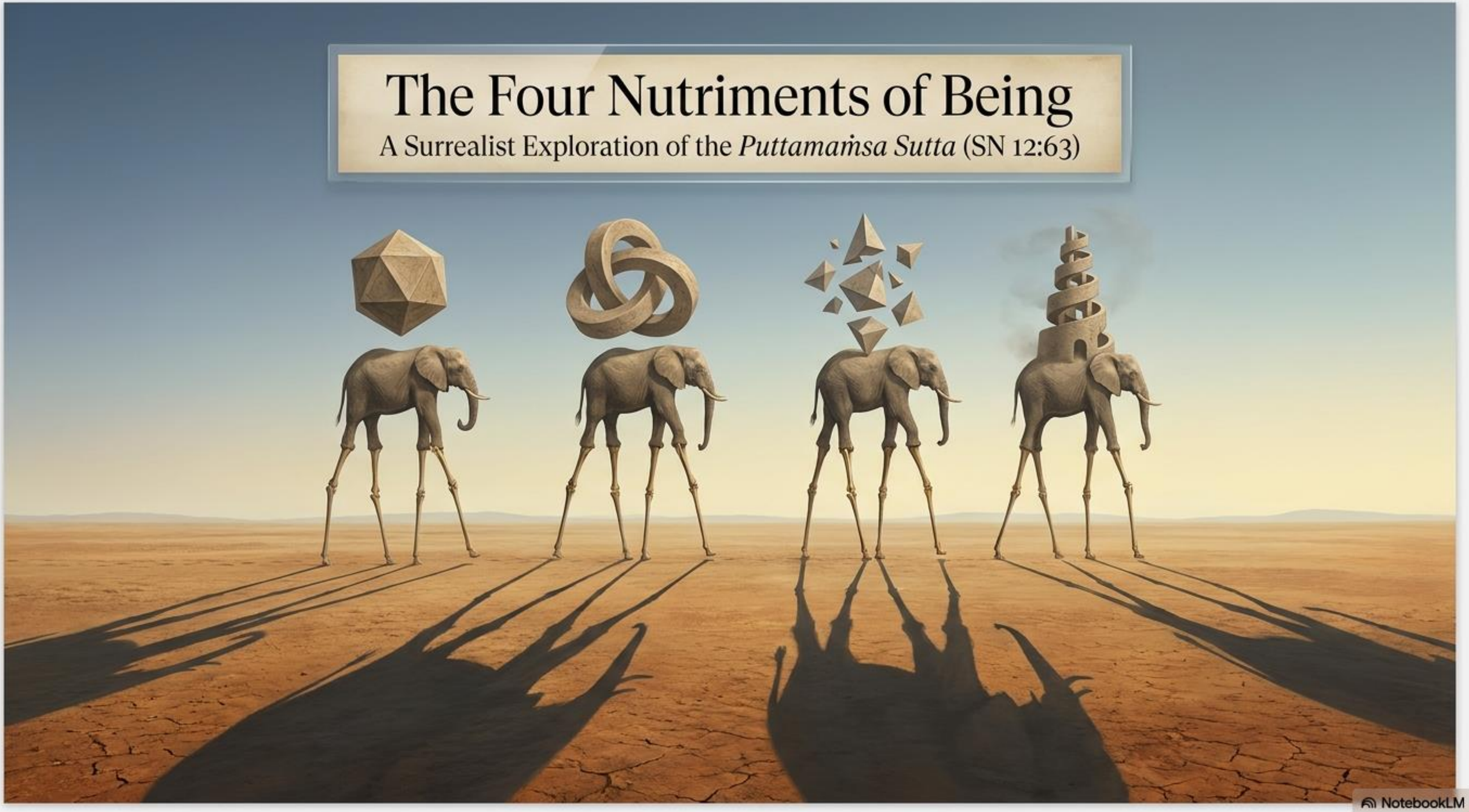
The Four Nutriments of Being

A Surrealist Exploration of the *Puttamaṁsa Sutta* (SN 12:63)



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The Anatomy of Being
The Four Nutriments and the Path to Ultimate Liberation.
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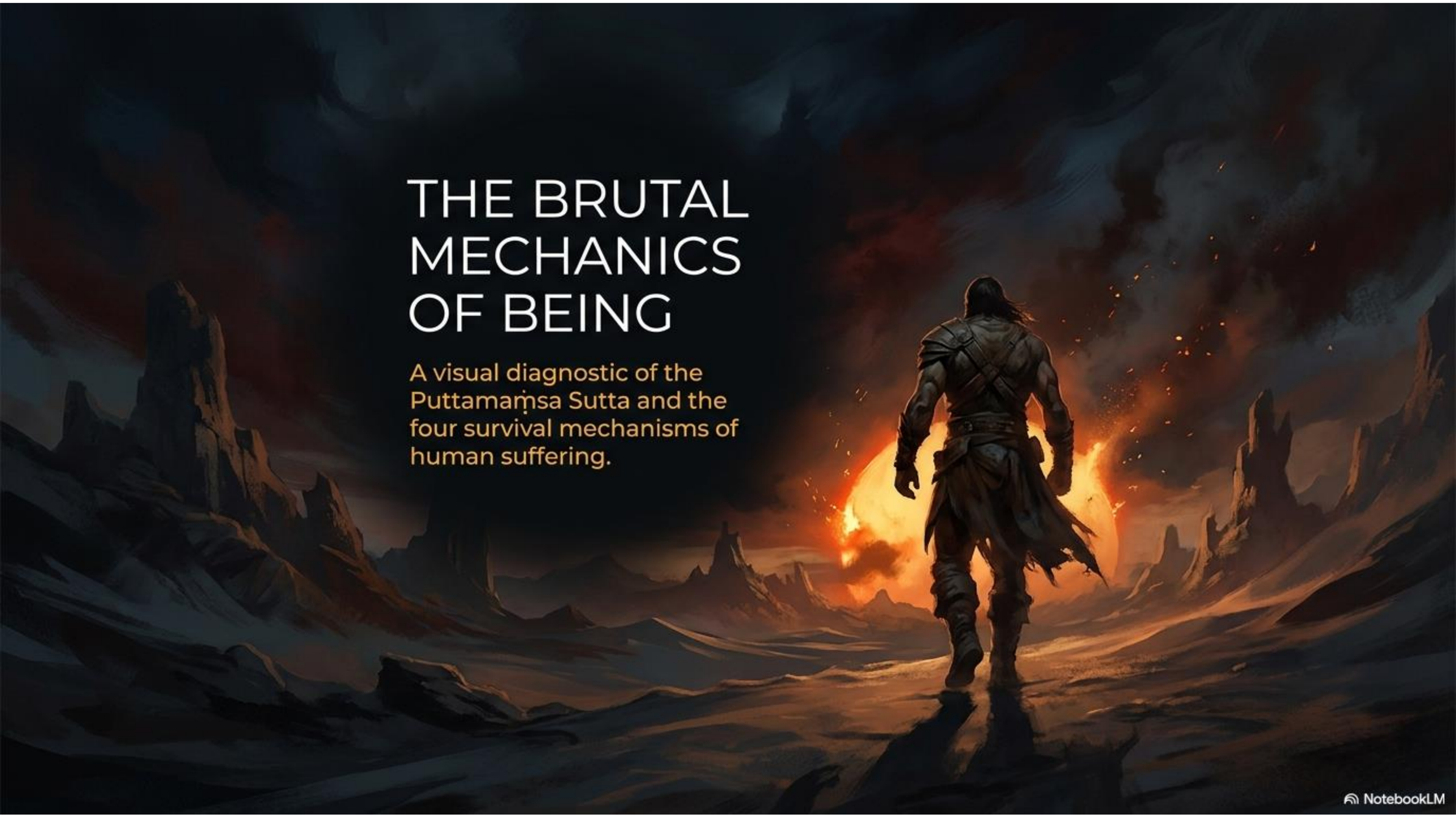
THE BRUTAL MECHANICS OF BEING
A visual diagnostic of the Puttamaṃsa Sutta and the four survival mechanisms of human suffering.
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Existence requires sustenance to persist.

To maintain beings who have come into being, or to support those in search search of a place to be born, the Buddha identified four distinct nutriments.

The Trap of Feeding

We consume the world blindly. To achieve liberation, the noble disciple must **comprehend the grim reality** behind these four **sources** of sustenance.

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SURVIVAL IS A FETTER

To exist is to consume. The Buddha identified four ‘nutriments’ required for the maintenance of beings who have come into being, or for the support of those in search of a place to be born. They are not gifts of life; they are brutal necessities that bind the mind to suffering.

1. Physical Food (gross or refined)
2. Contact
3. Intellectual Intention
4. Consciousness

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The Architecture of Survival

There are these four nutriments for the maintenance of beings who have come into being or for the support of those in search of a place to be born.

1. Physical food (gross or refined)

2. Contact (sensory input)

3. Intellectual intention (cognitive drive)

4. Consciousness (base awareness)

Existence is not passive. To remain in being requires **constant, desperate consumption.**

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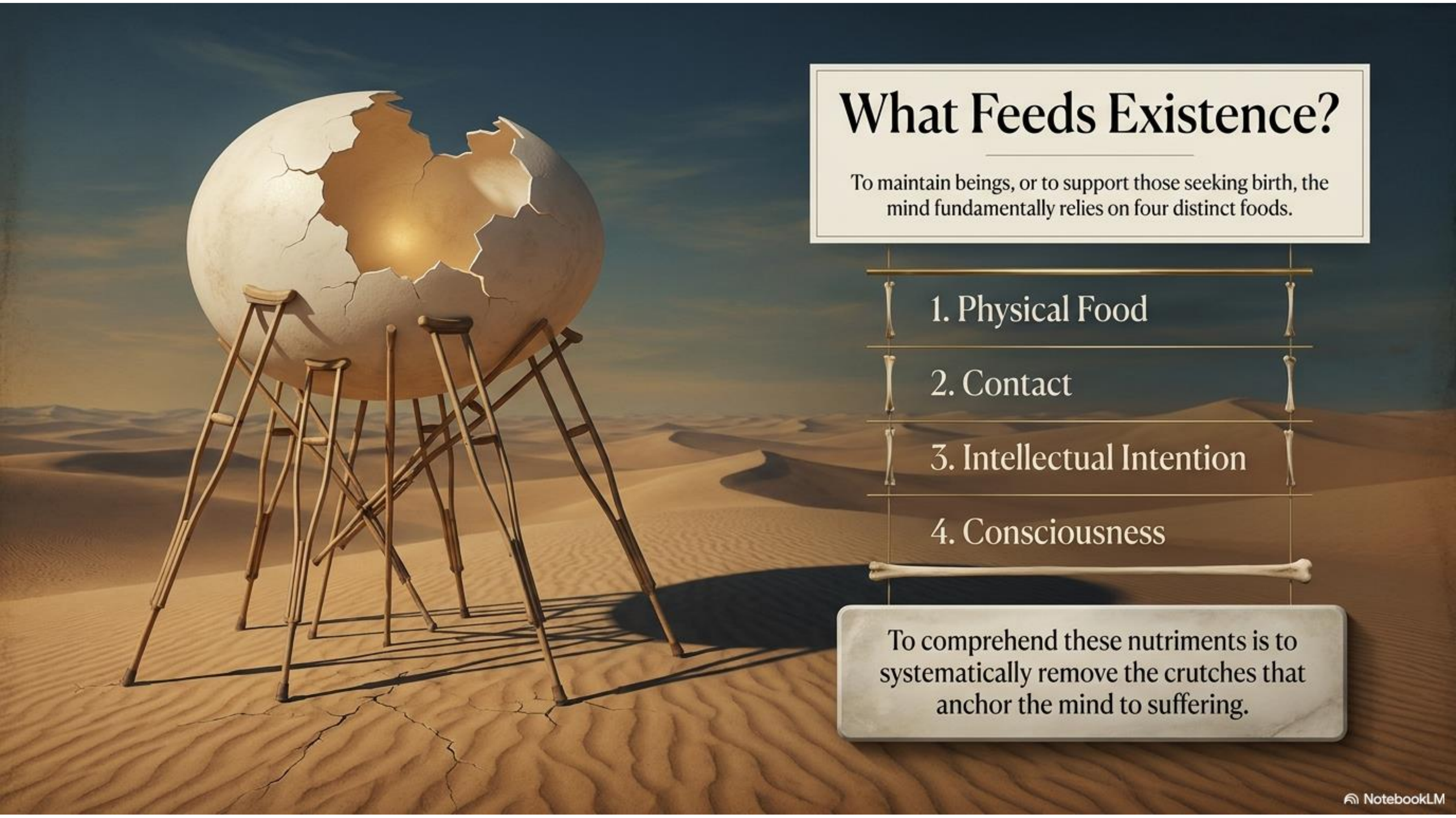
What Feeds Existence?
To maintain beings, or to support those seeking birth, the mind fundamentally relies on four distinct foods.
1. Physical Food
2. Contact
3. Intellectual Intention
4. Consciousness
To comprehend these nutriments is to systematically remove the crutches that anchor the mind to suffering.
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Four tethers bind beings to existence

There are four nutriments for the maintenance of beings who have come into being, or for the support of those in search of a place to be born.

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I. Physical Food (Gross or Refined)

The agony of the desert crossing.

A husband and wife traverse a desert with meager provisions. Running out of food, they realize they will all perish. To survive the crossing, they make the unthinkable choice to kill their only beloved baby son, making dried meat and jerky. As they chew the flesh to survive, they beat their breasts, crying, “Where have you gone, our only baby son?”

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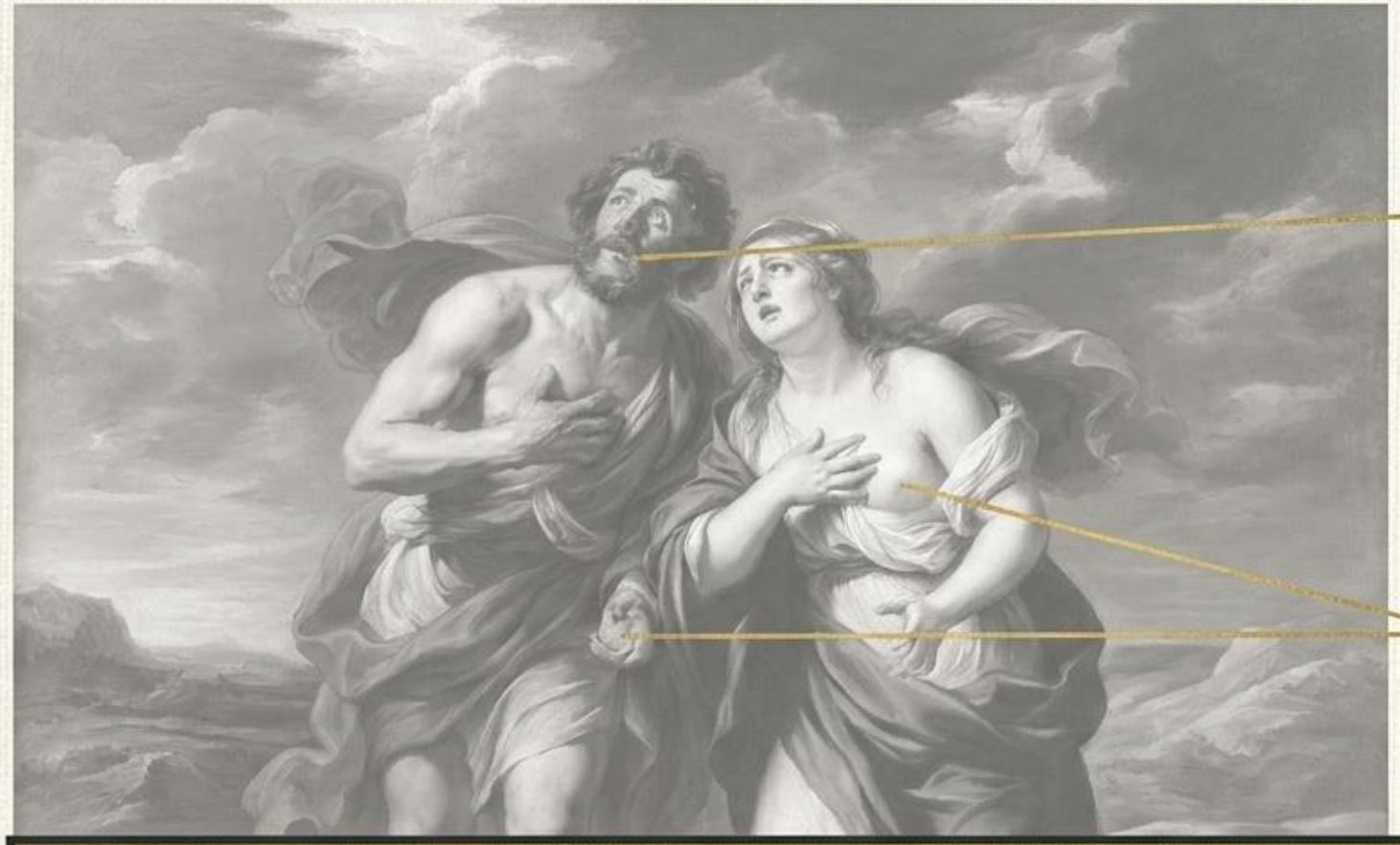

Not for play, intoxication, putting on bulk, or beautification. Eating is strictly for the sake of making it through the desert of existence.

The consumption of physical food should be viewed with this exact level of tragic necessity and revulsion.

Comprehending physical food shatters the illusion of sensuality.

When physical food is comprehended, passion for the five strings of sensuality is comprehended. Upon this realization, no fetter remains that would bind a noble disciple to come back to this world.

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The Calculus of Starvation

[Biological Deficit]

[Extreme Action]

Do they eat playfully? → No.

For intoxication? → No.

For beautification? → No.

Simply for the sake of making it through the desert? → Yes.

The Bind	The Release
The nutriment of physical food is a mechanical necessity, not a luxury. Understanding this strips away the illusion of pleasure.	When physical food is comprehended, passion for the five strings of sensuality is comprehended.

The Milestone: There is no fetter bound by which a disciple of the noble ones would come back again to this world.

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CONSUMING WITHOUT PASSION

Physical food must be viewed exactly as grieving parents view the flesh of their child. It is consumed not playfully, not for intoxication, putting on bulk, or beautification, but solely to survive the desert of existence.
Sight
Sound
Smell
Taste
Touch
The World
The Liberation: Comprehending physical food breaks the passion for the five strings of sensuality. When this passion is comprehended, there is no fetter bound by which a noble disciple would ever return to this world.

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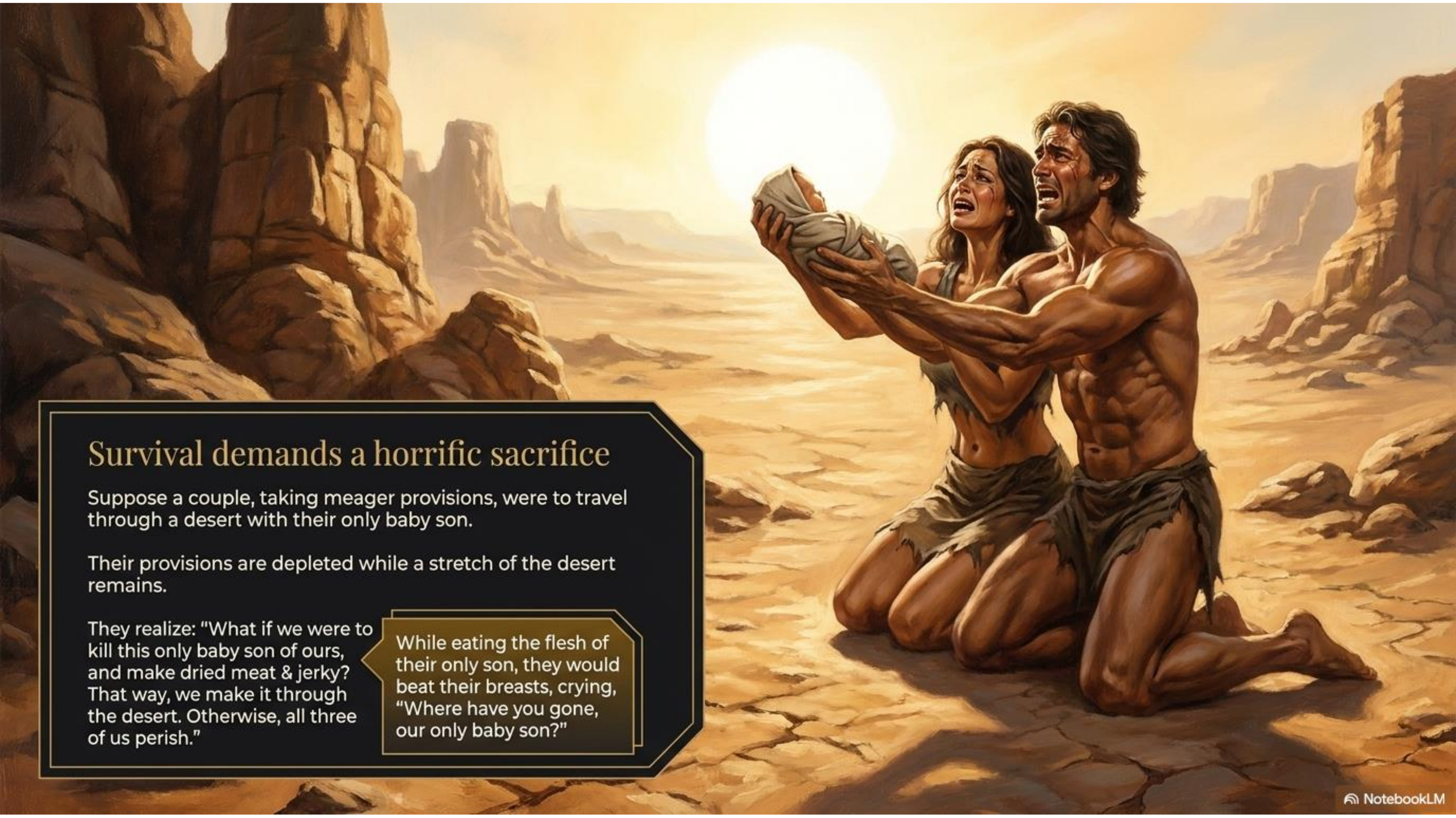
Survival demands a horrific sacrifice
Suppose a couple, taking meager provisions, were to travel through a desert with their only baby son.
Their provisions are depleted while a stretch of the desert remains.
They realize: "What if we were to kill this only baby son of ours, and make dried meat & jerky? That way, we make it through the desert. Otherwise, all three of us perish."
While eating the flesh of their only son, they would beat their breasts, crying, "Where have you gone, our only baby son?"
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The Desert and the Impossible Choice

- A couple travels through a desolate desert with meager provisions.
- With them is their only baby son, loved and endearing.
- As provisions deplete, starvation guarantees all three will perish.
- The calculation: kill the child to make dried meat and jerky to cross the desert.

While eating the flesh of their only son, they would beat their breasts, crying, 'Where have you gone, our only baby son?'

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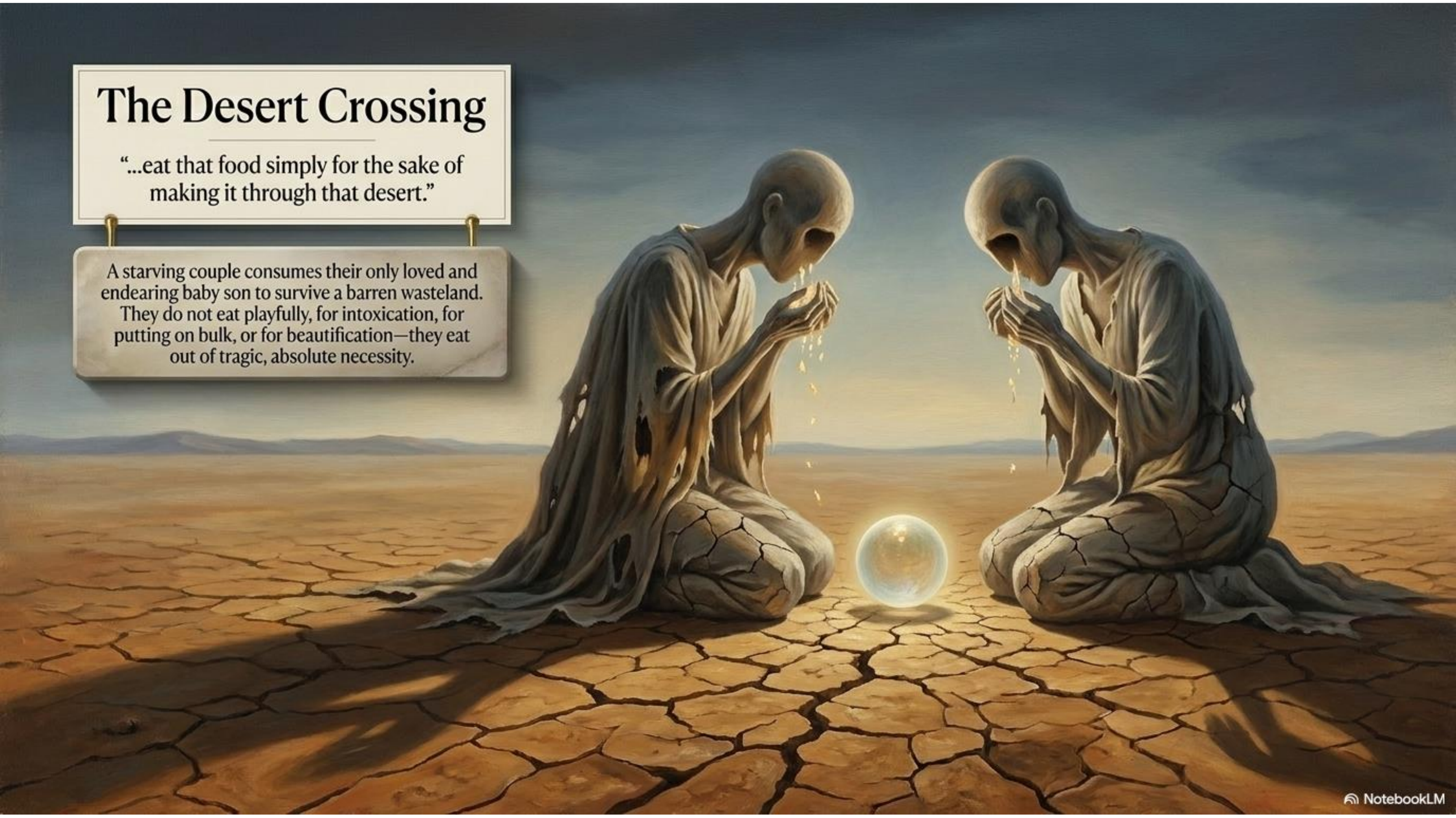
The Desert Crossing
"...eat that food simply for the sake of making it through that desert."
A starving couple consumes their only loved and endearing baby son to survive a barren wasteland. They do not eat playfully, for intoxication, for putting on bulk, or for beautification—they eat out of tragic, absolute necessity.
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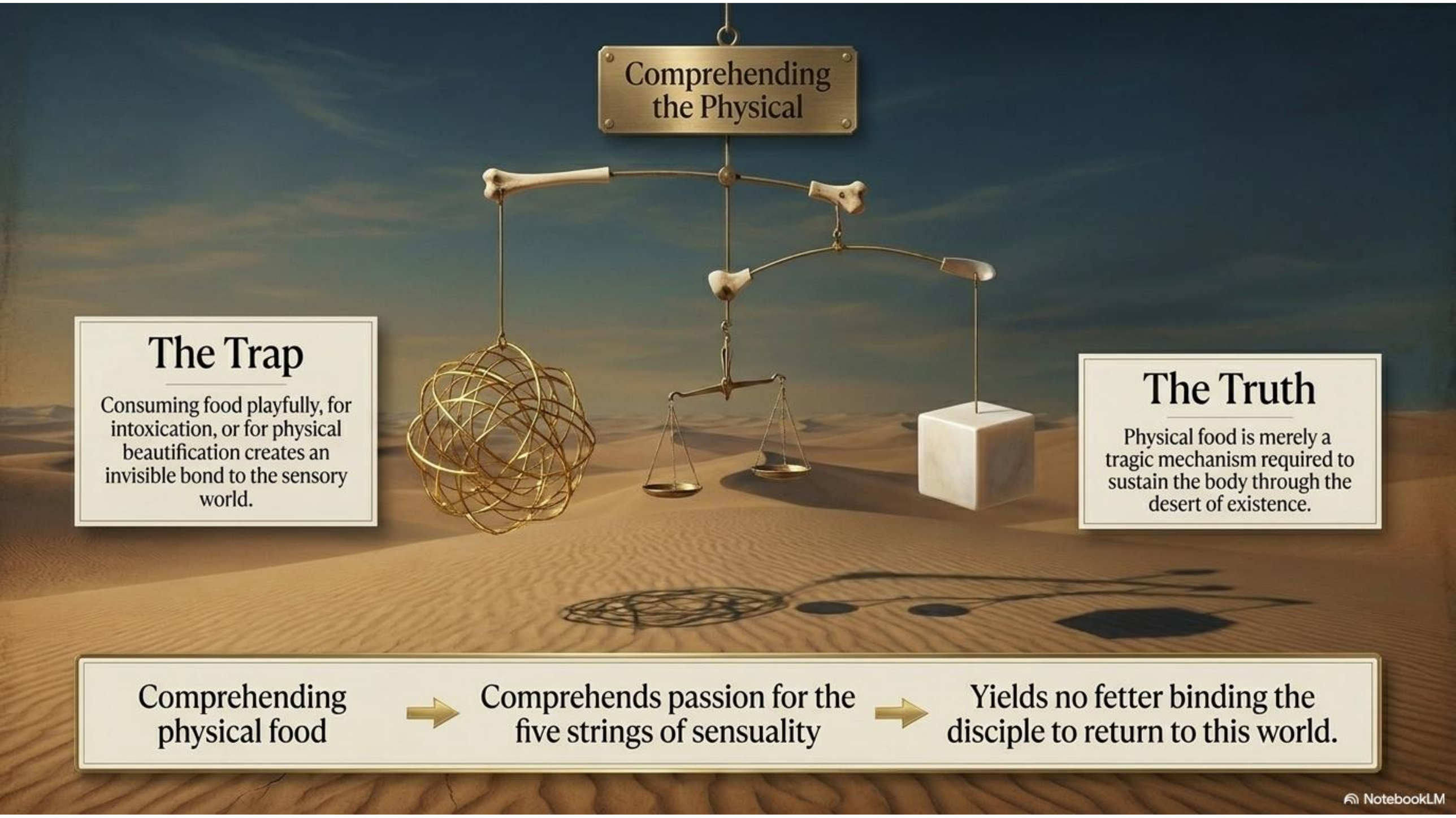
Comprehending the Physical
The Trap
Consuming food playfully, for intoxication, or for physical beautification creates an invisible bond to the sensory world.
The Truth
Physical food is merely a tragic mechanism required to sustain the body through the desert of existence.
Comprehending physical food
Comprehends passion for the five strings of sensuality
Yields no fetter binding the disciple to return to this world.

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II. Contact

To possess senses is to be perpetually flayed.

Imagine a flayed cow, entirely stripped of its skin.

If it leans against a wall, the creatures in the wall chew on it. If against a tree, the creatures of the tree chew on it.

Whether exposed to water or open air, the creatures living there relentlessly chew on its raw flesh. Wherever it stands, it is consumed.

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The senses are a merciless, inescapable bombardment

Suppose a flayed cow were to stand leaning against a wall, a tree, or exposed to water or air.

Wherever the flayed cow stands exposed, the creatures living in the wall, the tree, the water, or the air will chew on it.

In the same way, the nutriment of sensory contact is an unending consumption of the self by the external environment.

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The Exposed Form
For wherever the flayed cow were to stand exposed, the creatures living there would chew on it.
A being completely devoid of skin. Whether leaning against a wall, a tree, or exposed to the air and water, it is perpetually attacked and consumed by the environment it touches.
NotebookLM

THE EXPOSED NERVE
"Suppose a flayed cow were to stand leaning against a wall... tree... water... air. Wherever the flayed cow were to stand exposed, the creatures living there would chew on it."
NotebookLM

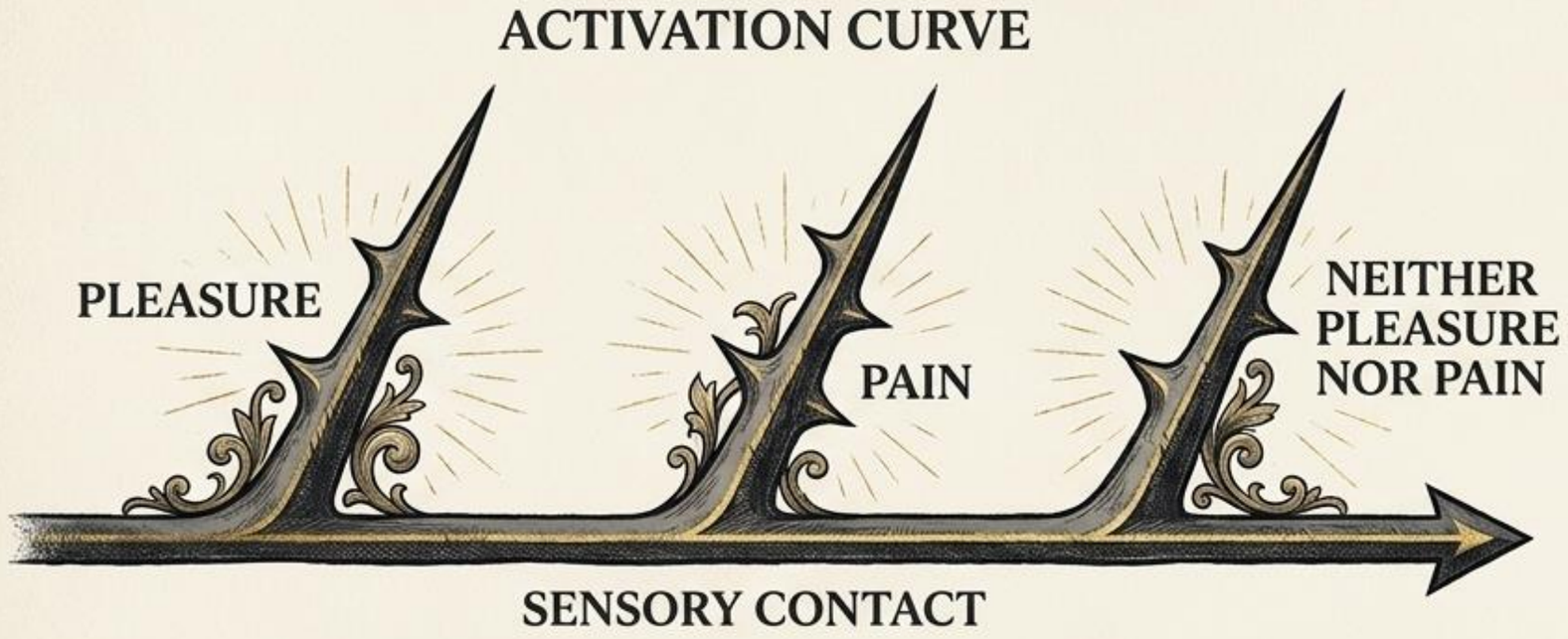
The Flayed Cow

A cow stripped of its skin stands leaning against a wall. Having lost its protective barrier, it is entirely at the mercy of its environment.

Diagnostic Matrix of Exposure	
Exposed to a wall	Creatures in the wall chew on it
Exposed to a tree	Creatures in the tree chew on it
Exposed to water	Aquatic creatures chew on it
Exposed to air	Aerial creatures chew on it
Wherever it stands, it is consumed.	

NotebookLM

Contact triggers the inevitability of the feelings.



To exist with sensory contact is to exist without a protective skin. Every sight, sound, and touch from the external world is an invasive force chewing at the raw nerve of the mind.

When the nutriment of contact is comprehended, the three feelings are comprehended. With this understanding, there is nothing further for a disciple of the noble ones to do.

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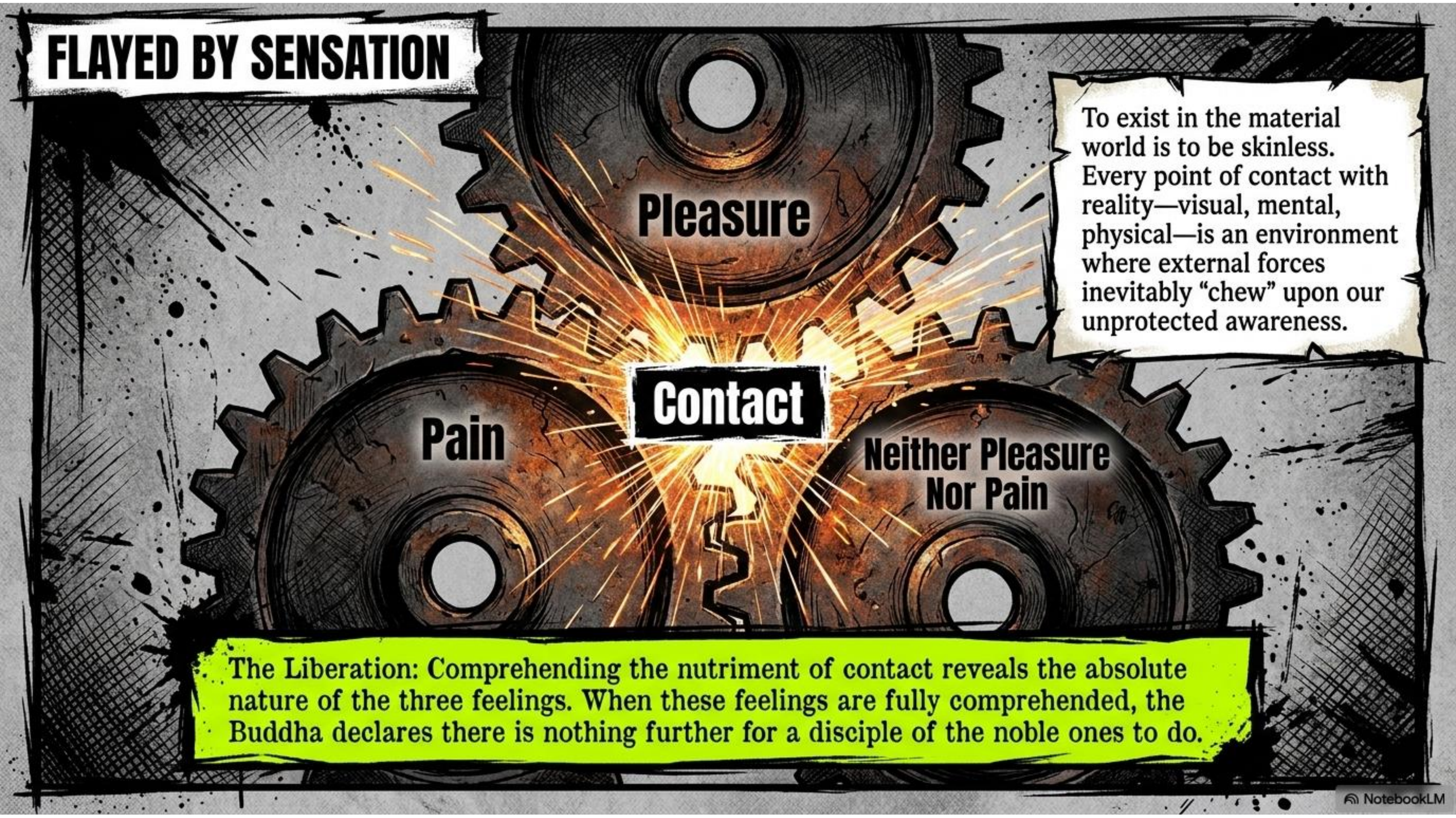
FLAYED BY SENSATION



To exist in the material world is to be skinless. Every point of contact with reality—visual, mental, physical—is an environment where external forces inevitably "chew" upon our unprotected awareness.

The Liberation: Comprehending the nutriment of contact reveals the absolute nature of the three feelings. When these feelings are fully comprehended, the Buddha declares there is nothing further for a disciple of the noble ones to do.

NotebookLM

III. Intellectual Intention

Intention is the sheer terror of the ember pit.

A man who loves life and hates pain is seized by two strong men. They drag him toward a pit of glowing embers deeper than a man's height. Realizing that falling in means death or death-like pain, his only intention, wish, and desperately focused aspiration is to get as far away from the pit as possible.

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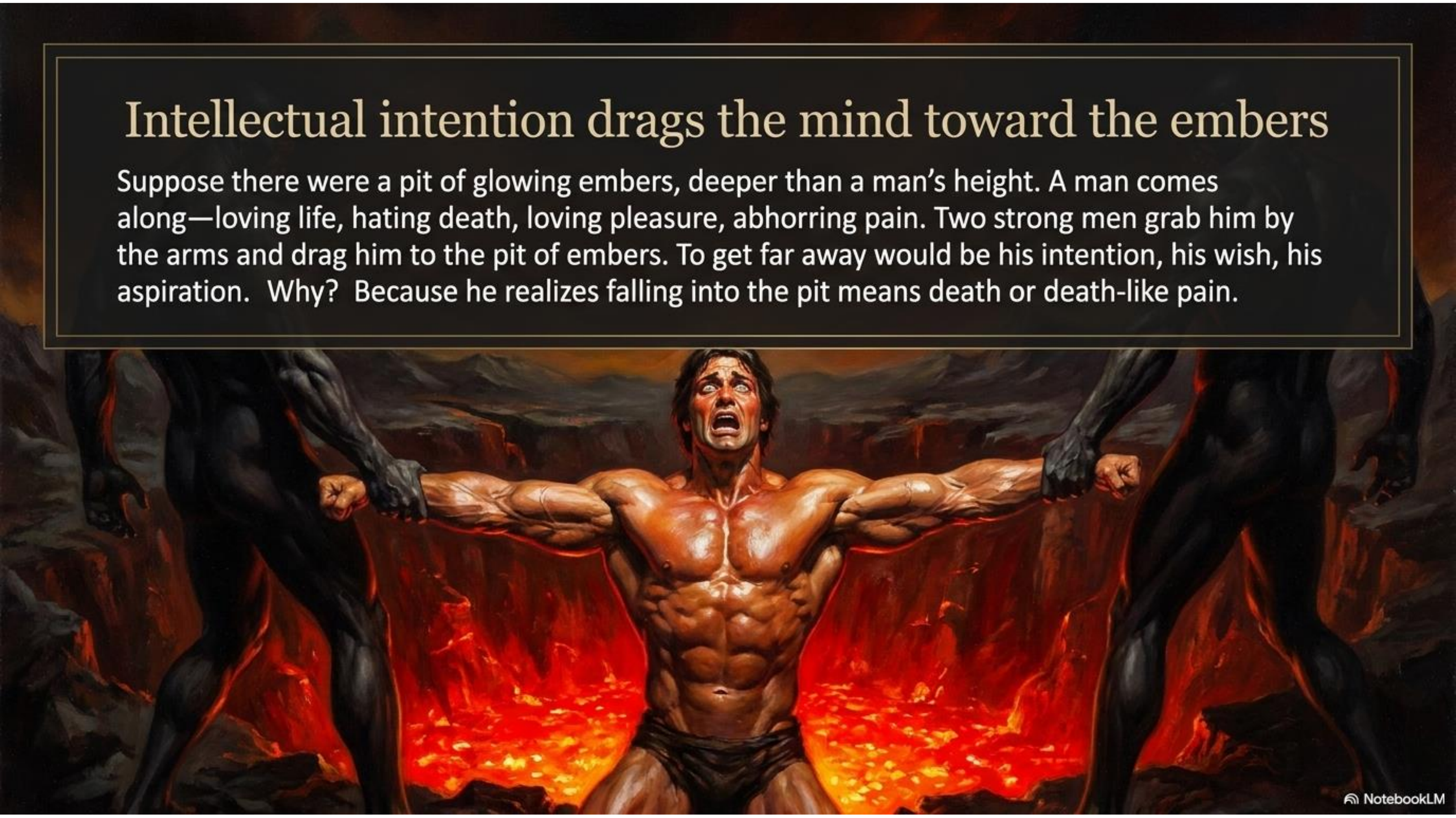
The Pit of Embers
To get far away would be that man's intention, far away would be his wish, far away would be his aspiration.
A man who loves life and hates pain is dragged by two strong men toward a deadly pit of glowing embers, deeper than a man's height.
NotebookLM

Intellectual intention drags the mind toward the embers

Suppose there were a pit of glowing embers, deeper than a man's height. A man comes along—loving life, hating death, loving pleasure, abhorring pain. Two strong men grab him by the arms and drag him to the pit of embers. To get far away would be his intention, his wish, his aspiration. Why? Because he realizes falling into the pit means death or death-like pain.



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THE PIT OF EMBERS
"Suppose there were a pit of glowing embers... and a man were to come along—loving life, hating death... and two strong men, having grabbed him by the arms, were to drag him to the pit."

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The will to act is fundamentally rooted in craving.

Our deepest intentions and intellectual drives are not born of freedom; they are a panicked, reflexive pull away from the burning pit of suffering. We reach for anything to save us.

When intellectual intention is comprehended, the three forms of craving are comprehended. The compulsion to act ceases, leaving nothing further to do.

NotebookLM

IV. Consciousness

Consciousness is an endless barrage of spear strikes.

A criminal is brought to a king. The king orders him stabbed with one hundred spears in the morning. At noon, told the man still lives, the king orders another hundred spears.
In the evening, hearing he survives, a final hundred spears are thrust into him.

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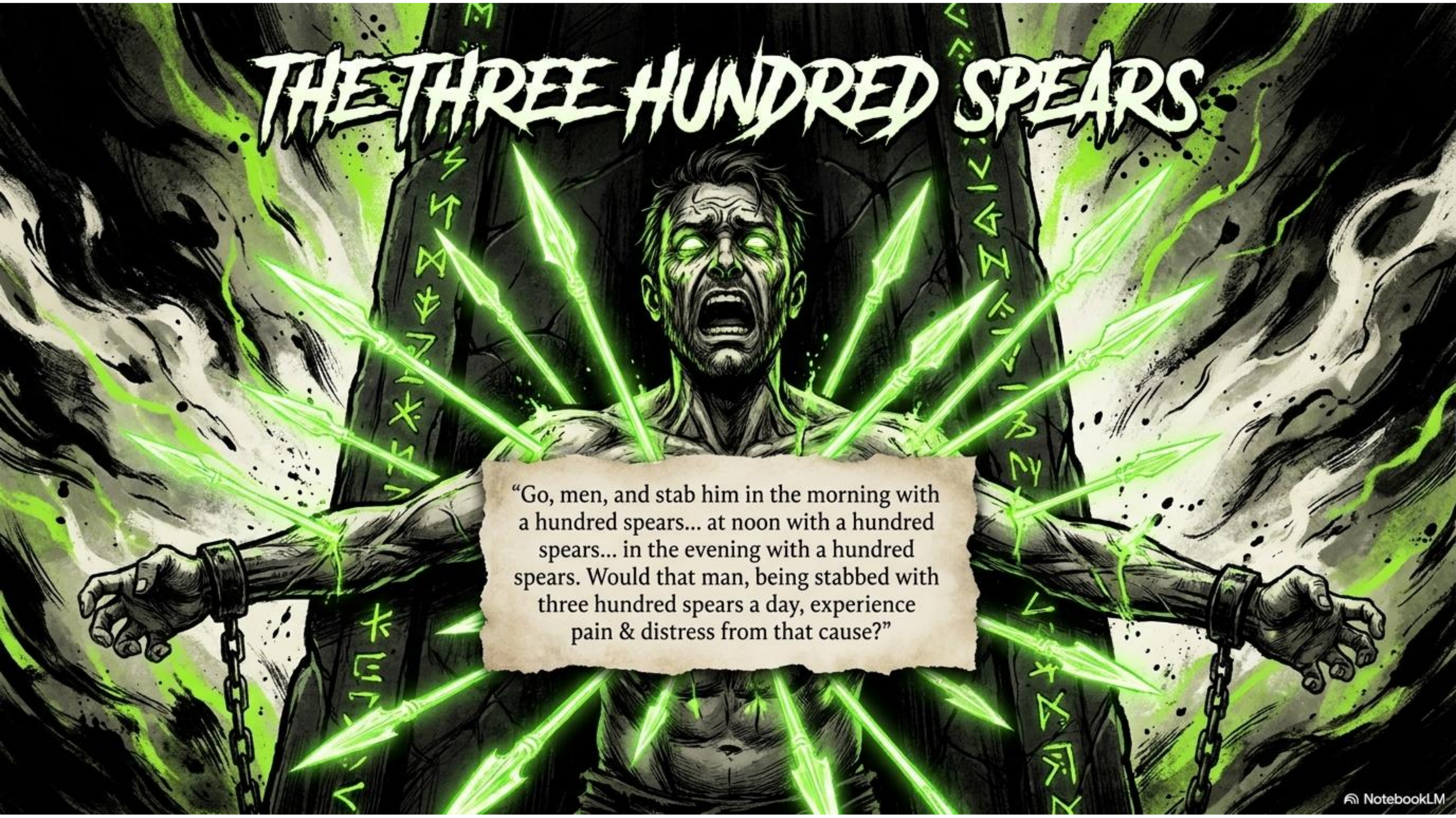

THE THREE HUNDRED SPEARS
"Go, men, and stab him in the morning with a hundred spears... at noon with a hundred spears... in the evening with a hundred spears. Would that man, being stabbed with three hundred spears a day, experience pain & distress from that cause?"
NotebookLM

THE THREE HUNDRED SPEARS

A criminal is brought before the King, who commands absolute punishment.

- Morning: Stabbed with a hundred spears.
- Noon: The king asks, “How is that man?” He is still alive. Stabbed with a hundred spears.
- Evening: Still alive. Stabbed with a final hundred spears.

“Would that man, being stabbed with three hundred spears a day, experience pain and distress from that cause?”

NotebookLM

The Rain of Spears
"Would that man, being stabbed with three hundred spears a day, experience pain & distress from that cause?"
"A criminal punished by the king: pierced mercilessly by a hundred spears in the morning, a hundred at noon, and a hundred in the evening. Still alive, enduring the endless accumulation of strikes."
NotebookLM

The Inevitability of Feeling

External World

Sensory Contact

The Bites of Experience

The Three Pillars of Feeling:

Every point of contact inevitably yields:

Pleasure

Pain

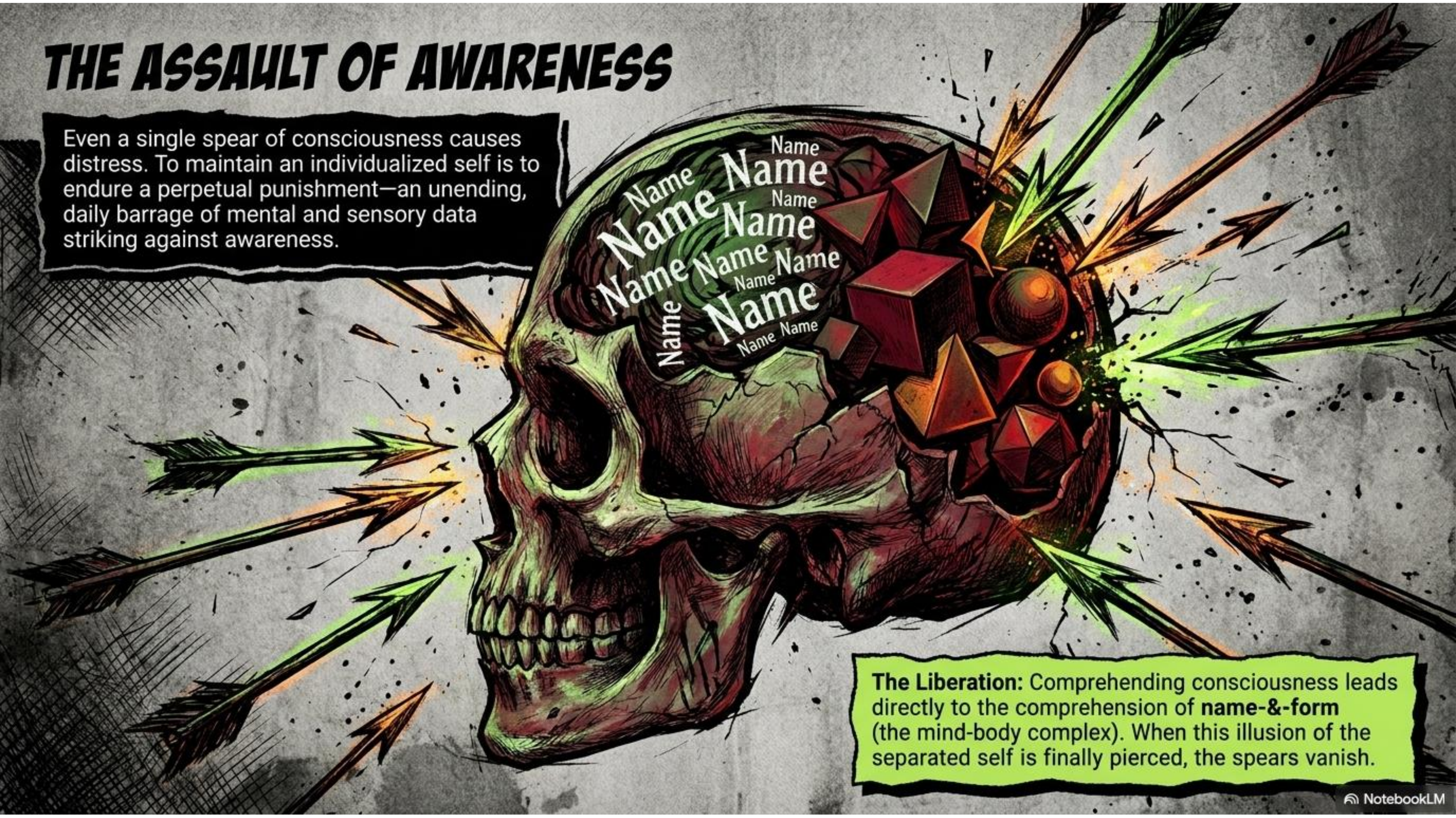
Neither pleasure nor pain

Comprehending the nutriment of contact → Comprehends the three feelings → Leaves nothing further for a disciple of the noble ones to do.

NotebookLM

THE ASSAULT OF AWARENESS

Even a single spear of consciousness causes distress. To maintain an individualized self is to endure a perpetual punishment—an unending, daily barrage of mental and sensory data striking against awareness.



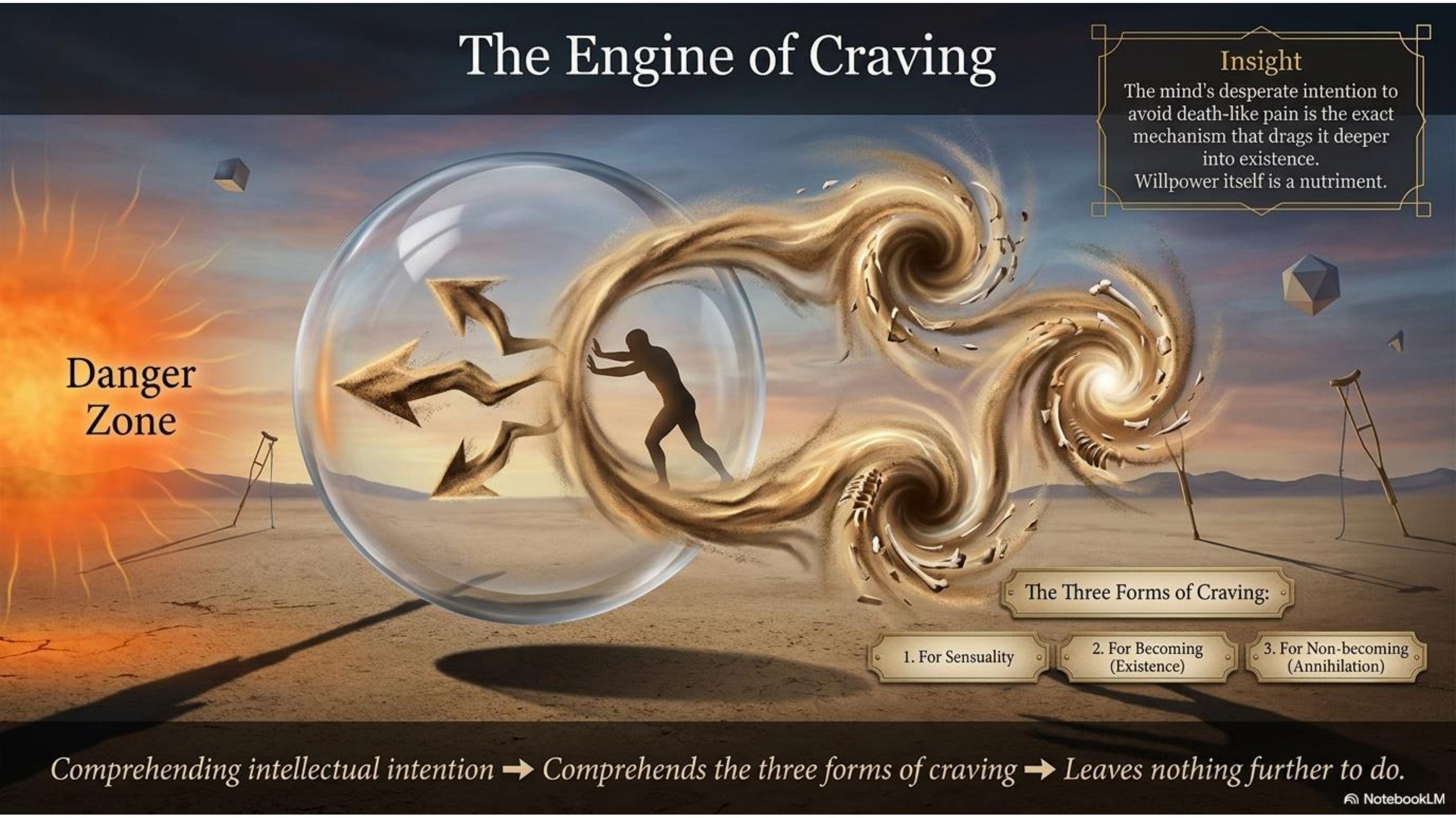
The Liberation: Comprehending consciousness leads directly to the comprehension of **name-&-form** (the mind-body complex). When this illusion of the separated self is finally pierced, the spears vanish.

NotebookLM

The Engine of Craving

Insight

The mind's desperate intention to avoid death-like pain is the exact mechanism that drags it deeper into existence.
Willpower itself is a nutriment.



Comprehending intellectual intention → Comprehends the three forms of craving → Leaves nothing further to do.

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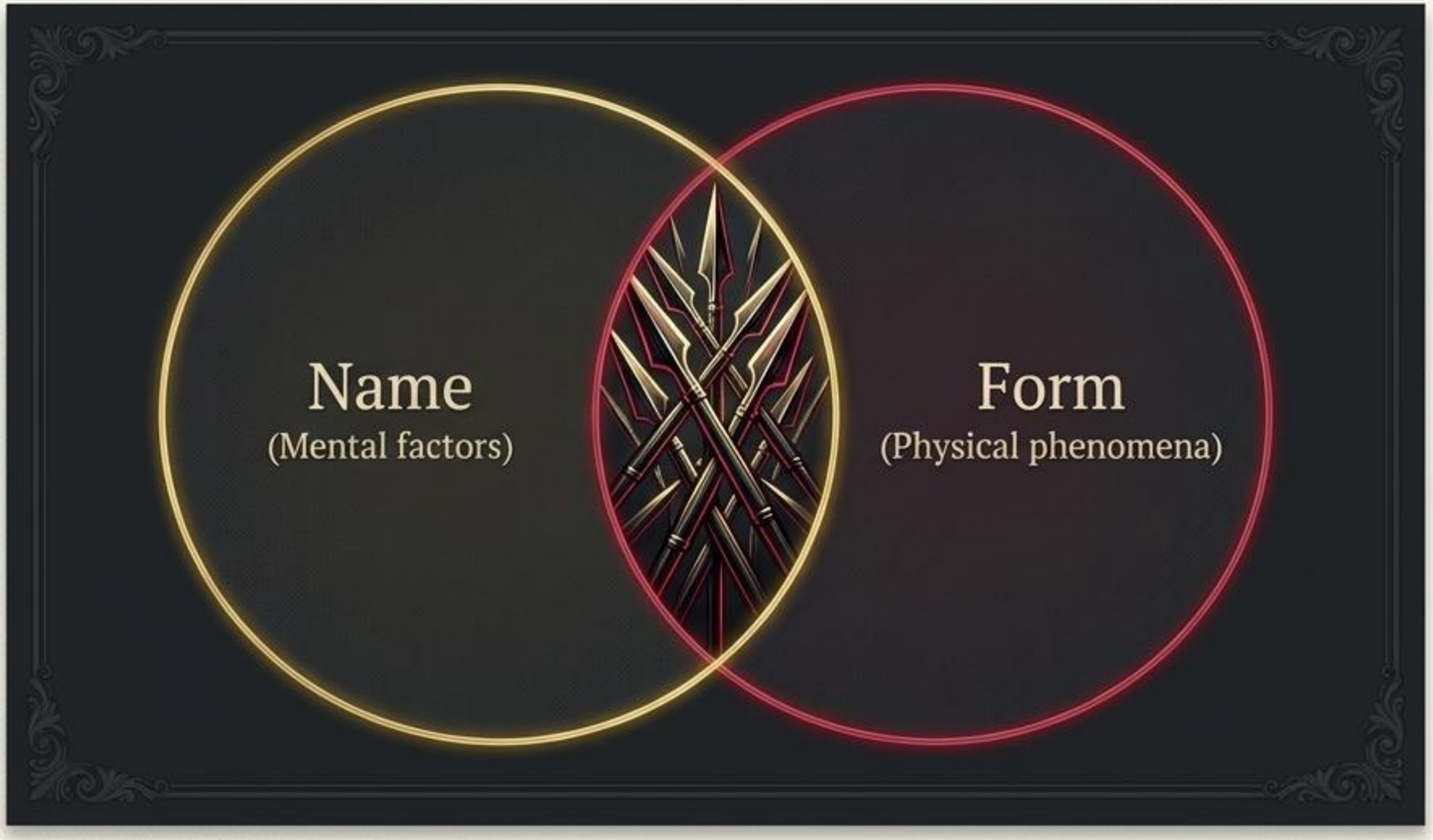
Awareness locks the mind into name-and-form.



Even a single spear strike causes immense pain and distress.
Experiencing three hundred in a single day is unfathomable.

Yet, every individual moment of consciousness is just such a strike—a sharp, painful collision between awareness and an object.

When the nutriment of consciousness is comprehended, name-&-form is comprehended.
By seeing consciousness as an endless barrage of impacts, the illusion of the self is shattered.

NotebookLM

The precise mathematics behind the visceral metaphors.

Nutriment	Visceral Metaphor	The Psychological Fetter	The Result
Physical Food	The Starving Desert Crossing	Passion for the 5 strings of sensuality	No return to this world
Contact	The Flayed Cow exposed to elements	The Three Feelings (Pleasure, Pain, Neutral)	Nothing further to do
Intention	The Pit of Glowing Embers	The Three Forms of Craving	Nothing further to do
Consciousness	300 Spear Strikes a Day	Name-&-Form	Nothing further to do

The *Puttamaṁsa Sutta* does not use shock value for its own sake. It perfectly maps biological, sensory, volitional, and cognitive inputs to the specific psychological chains that bind us.

NotebookLM

The Matrix of Release

The Anatomy of Being dismantled through comprehension.

The Nutriment	The Agony (Metaphor)	The Core Realization	The Ultimate Liberation
Physical Food	The Desert Sacrifice	Passion for 5 strings of sensuality is comprehended	No fetter binding return to this world
Contact	The Flayed Beast	The three feelings are comprehended	Nothing further to do
Intellectual Intention	The Pit of Embers	The three forms of craving are comprehended	Nothing further to do
Consciousness	The 300 Spears	Name-&-form is comprehended	Nothing further to do

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DIAGNOSTIC MATRIX OF SUFFERING

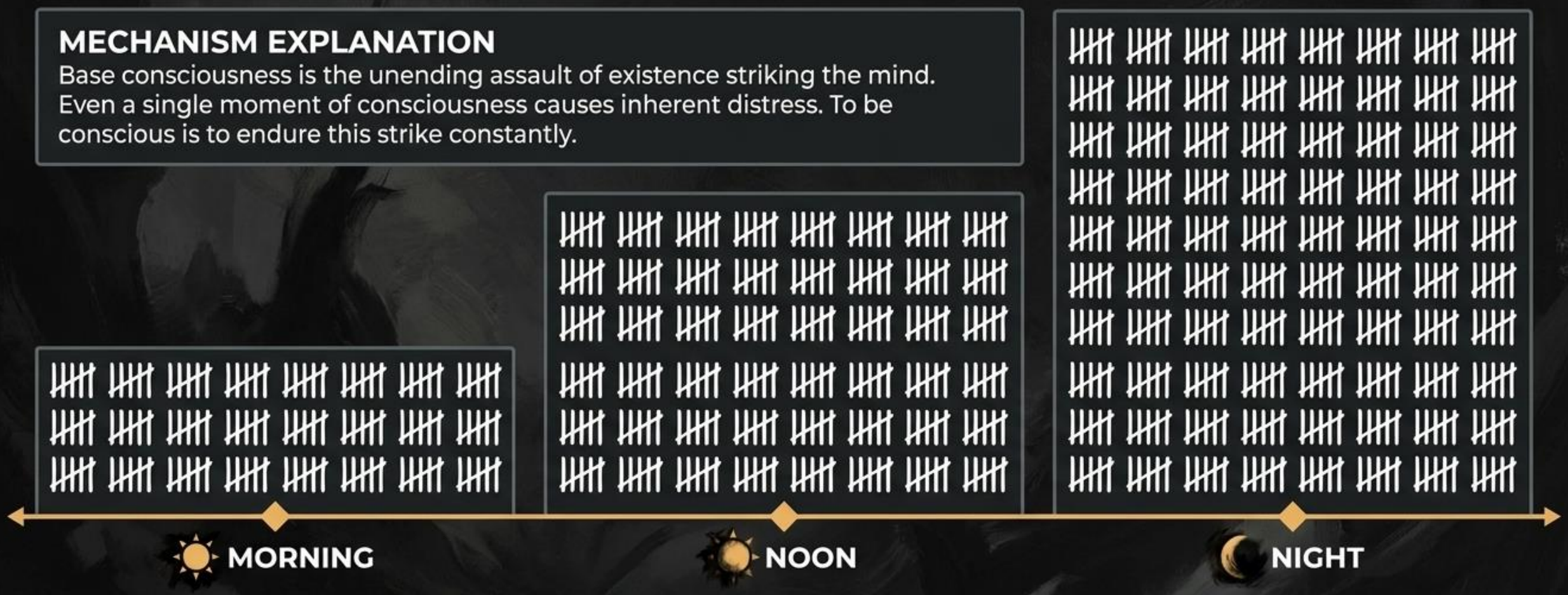
THE NUTRIMENT	THE METAPHOR	THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FETTER	THE CONDITION OF LIBERATION
Physical Food	The Eaten Child	Passion for the 5 Strings of Sensuality	No return to this world.
Contact	The Flayed Cow	The Three Feelings (Pleasure, Pain, Neutrality)	Nothing further to do.
Intellectual Intention	The Pit of Embers	The Three Cravings (Sensuality, Becoming, Non-becoming)	Nothing further to do.
Consciousness	The 300 Spears	Name-&-Form (Mind and Body)	Nothing further to do.

NotebookLM

THE CUMULATIVE TRAUMA OF AWARENESS

MECHANISM EXPLANATION

Base consciousness is the unending assault of existence striking the mind. Even a single moment of consciousness causes inherent distress. To be conscious is to endure this strike constantly.



THE BIND

The nutriment of consciousness binds the individual to name-&-form (mind and matter).

THE RELEASE

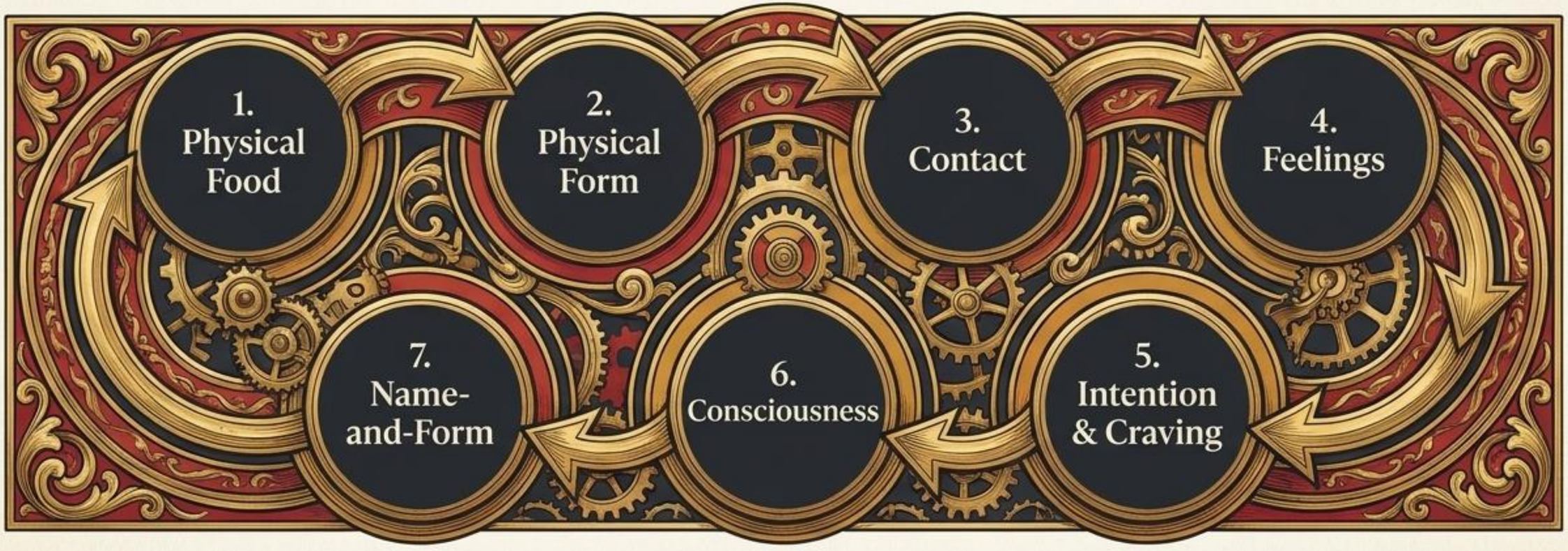
When name-&-form is comprehended, the foundation collapses. There is nothing further for a disciple of the noble ones to do.

NotebookLM

THE WEIGHT OF MAINTENANCE
To remain in existence is to starve in a desert, to be chewed upon without a skin, to be dragged into fire by your own desires, and to be pierced three hundred times a day.
These are not tragedies that happen to life.
These are the required nutriments that sustain it.
NotebookLM

The nutriments form a closed-loop architecture of suffering.

These four pillars are the complete biological and psychological life-support system of Samsara. They continually feed into one another, turning the wheel of rebirth. To comprehend them is to systematically cut the supply lines.



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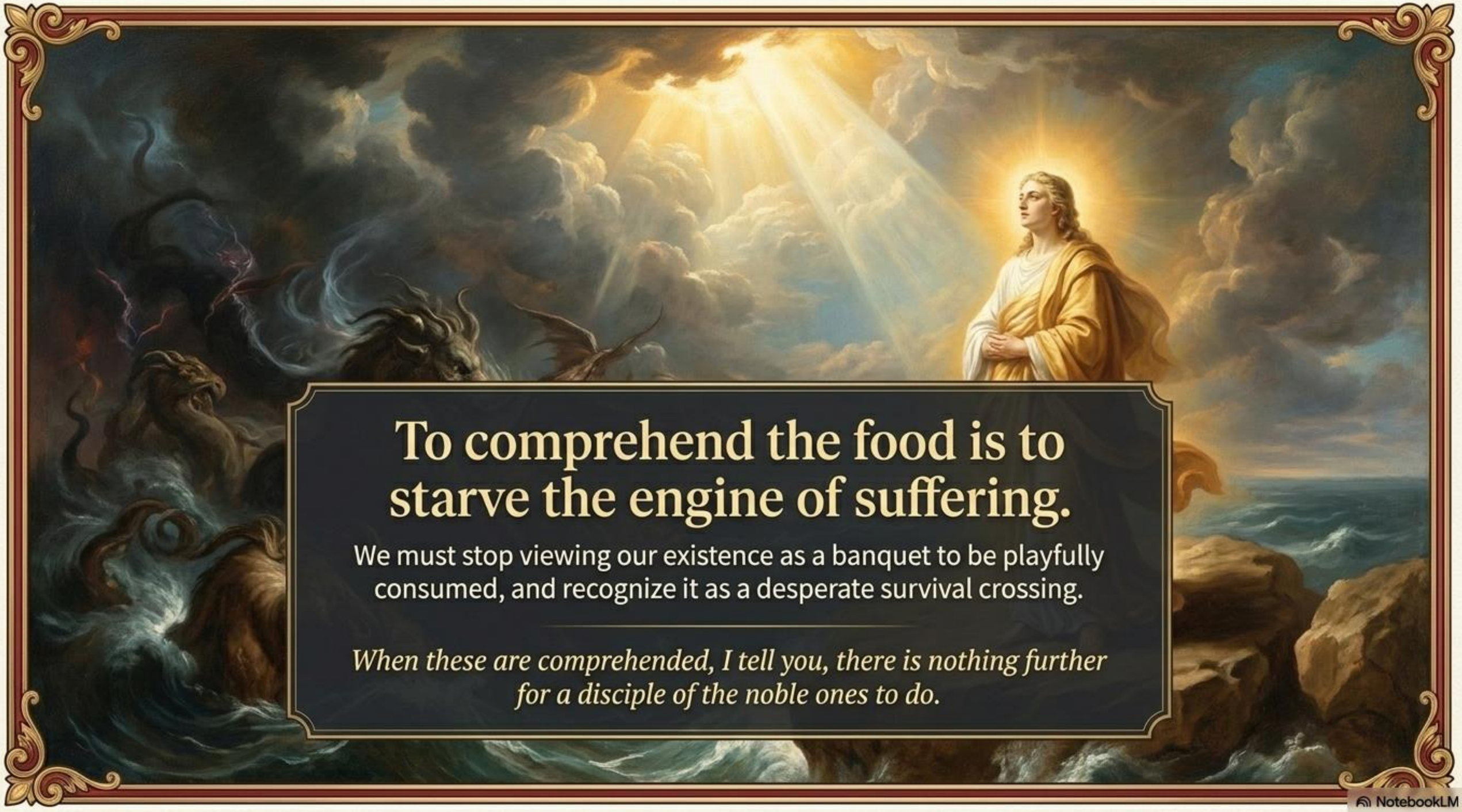
To comprehend the food is to starve the engine of suffering.
We must stop viewing our existence as a banquet to be playfully consumed, and recognize it as a desperate survival crossing.
When these are comprehended, I tell you, there is nothing further for a disciple of the noble ones to do.
NotebookLM

FROM MATTER TO MIND

Gross Matter: We begin physically bound by what we must eat to survive.

Sensory Interface: We escalate to how our physical boundary feels external contact.

Karmic Drive: We deepen into the intellectual willpower and desire that animates us.

Pure Awareness: We ultimately suffer from the mere baseline act of being conscious.

NotebookLM

Comprehending physical food shatters the fetter of sensuality

Physical food is not to be eaten playfully, for intoxication, for bulk, or for beautification—but simply for the sake of making it through the desert.

[The Trap]
Physical Food
[The Action]
Comprehended as mere survival
[The Insight]
Passion for the Five Strings of Sensuality is comprehended
[The Result]
No fetter remains by which a disciple would come back to this world.

NotebookLM

Comprehending contact neutralizes the three feelings

When the nutriment of contact is seen purely as environmental friction, its psychological power dissolves.

Nutriment of Contact

Pleasure

Pain

Neither Pleasure nor Pain

When the three feelings are comprehended, there e is nothing further for a disciple of the noble ones to do.

NotebookLM

THE ENGINE OF BECOMING

Physical Food sustains the biological form.

The biological form generates Sensory Contact.

Sensory Contact provokes Intellectual Intention (Craving).

Intention drives Consciousness to seek a new body.

The four nutriments do not operate in isolation. They form a closed-loop system designed to maintain beings who have come into being, and secure a place for those searching to be born.

NotebookLM

Comprehending intention extinguishes the three forms of craving

Intellectual intention is the desperate pull against the inevitability of suffering.
Recognizing this dismantles craving.

The Craving	The Mechanism
Craving for Sensuality	The desire to consume the world.
Craving for Becoming	The desire to exist as a self.
Craving for Non-becoming	The desperate intention to escape or annihilate the self.

When the three forms of craving are comprehended,
there is nothing further for a disciple of the noble ones to do.

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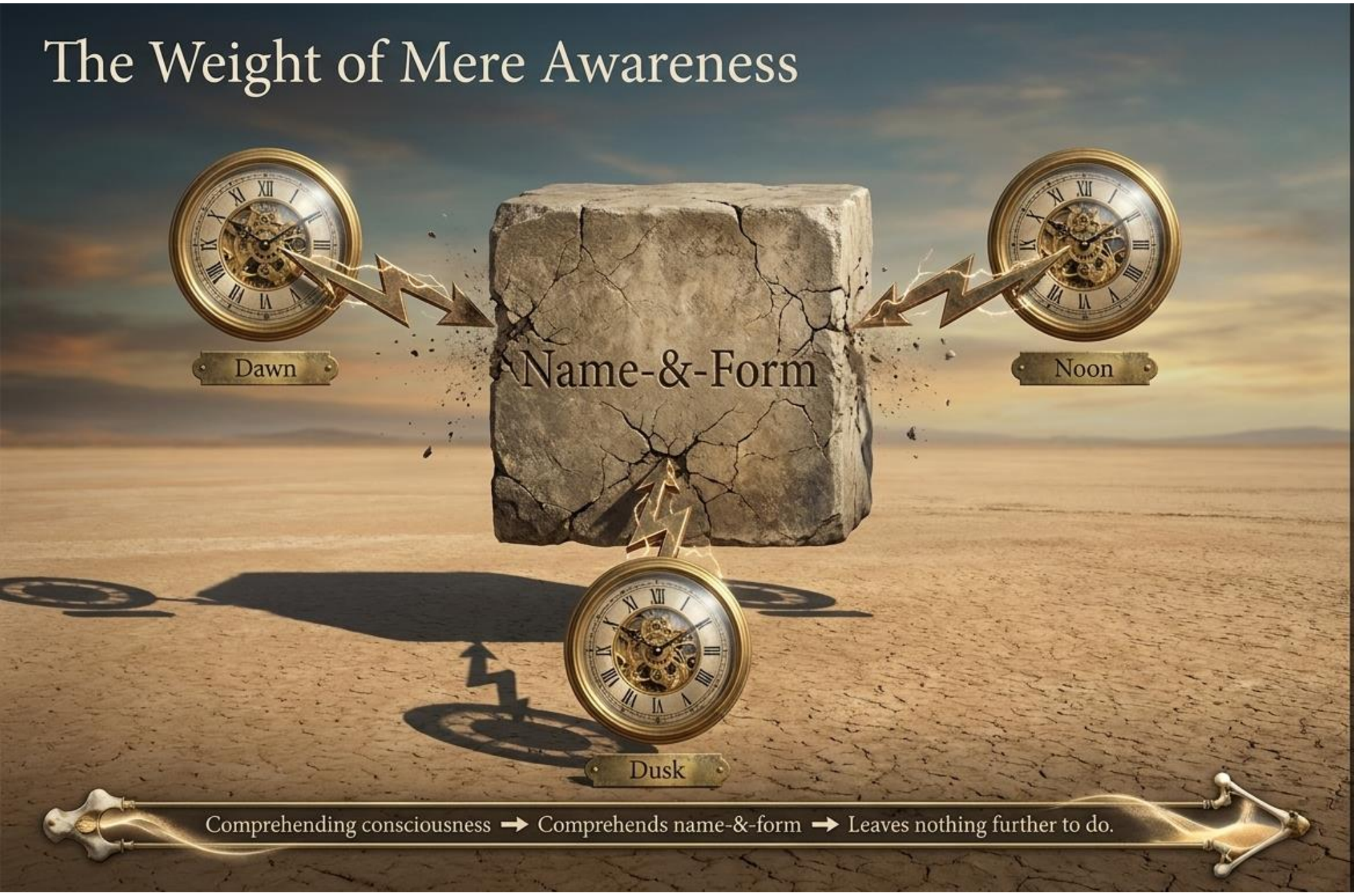
The Weight of Mere Awareness



The sheer act of being conscious is an ongoing accumulation of distress.

Even a single moment of awareness pierces the mind; three hundred moments compound the suffering endlessly.

Consciousness is the ultimate foundation. It is the nutriment that sustains Name-&-Form (the entire mental and physical body complex).

NotebookLM

Continuous awareness is a relentless daily impalement

Suppose the king orders a criminal to be stabbed in the morning with a hundred spears. At noon, he is still alive, so the king orders him stabbed with a hundred spears more. In the evening, still alive, he is stabbed with another hundred spears.

> "Even if he were to be stabbed with only one spear, he would experience pain & distress from that cause, to say nothing of three hundred spears."

NotebookLM

Comprehending consciousness pierces the illusion of name-and-form

Consciousness is the continuous impact of experience. To identify with it is to endure three hundred spears a day.

Target: Consciousness

(The constant striking of awareness)

Target: Name-&-Form

(The illusion of individual identity and physical body)

When name-&-form is comprehended, the illusion breaks. There is nothing further for a disciple of the noble ones to do.

NotebookLM

COMPREHENSION AS THE CATALYST

The *Puttamaṁsa Sutta* does not demand that we fight the strong men, grow a new skin for the cow, or pull the spears from the criminal.

The mechanism of liberation is singularly intellectual: Comprehension.

To clearly see the nutriments for what they are strips them of their intoxicating power. The machine of suffering breaks down not by force, but by observation.

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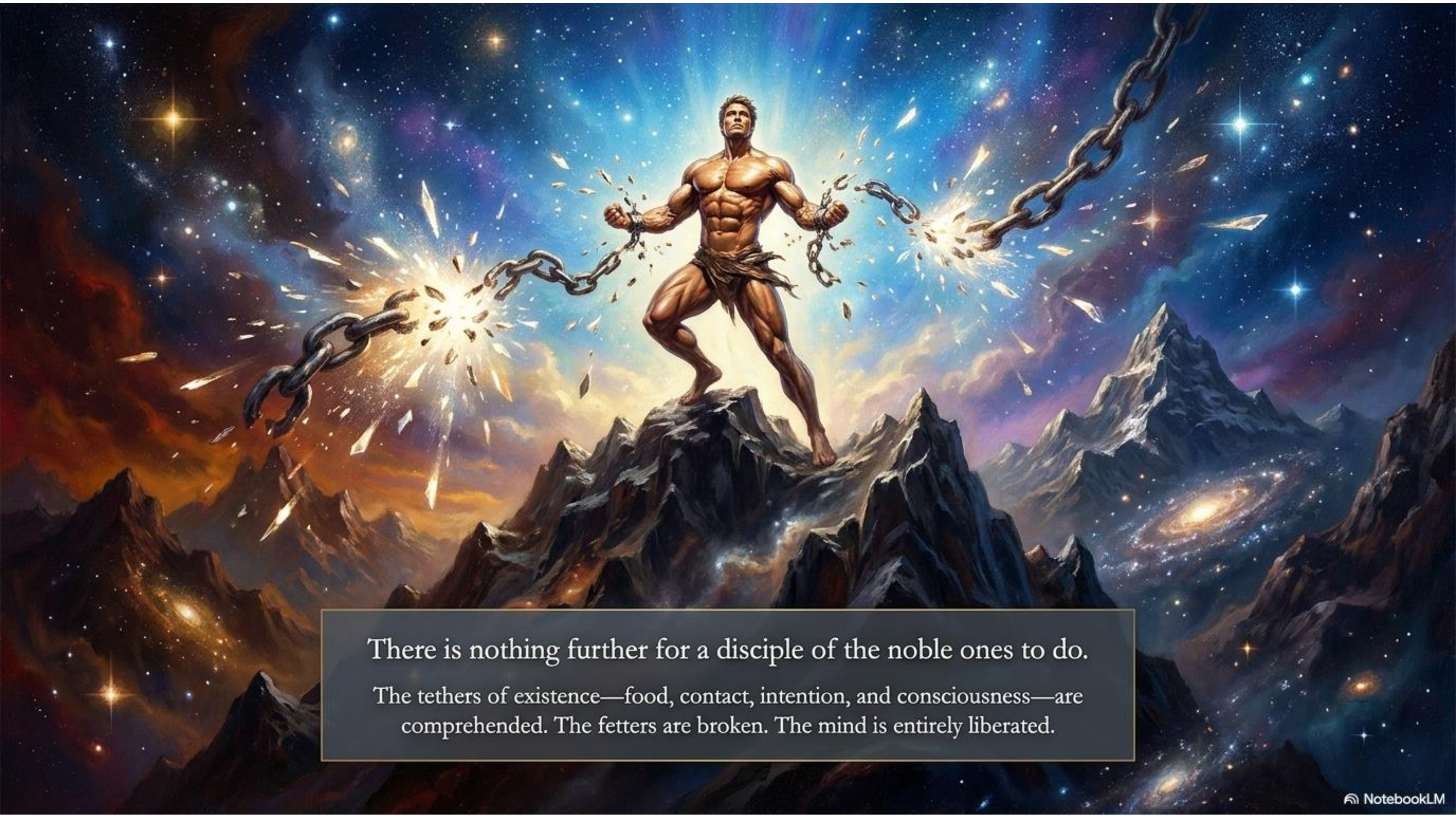
There is nothing further for a disciple of the noble ones to do.
The tethers of existence—food, contact, intention, and consciousness—are comprehended. The fetters are broken. The mind is entirely liberated.
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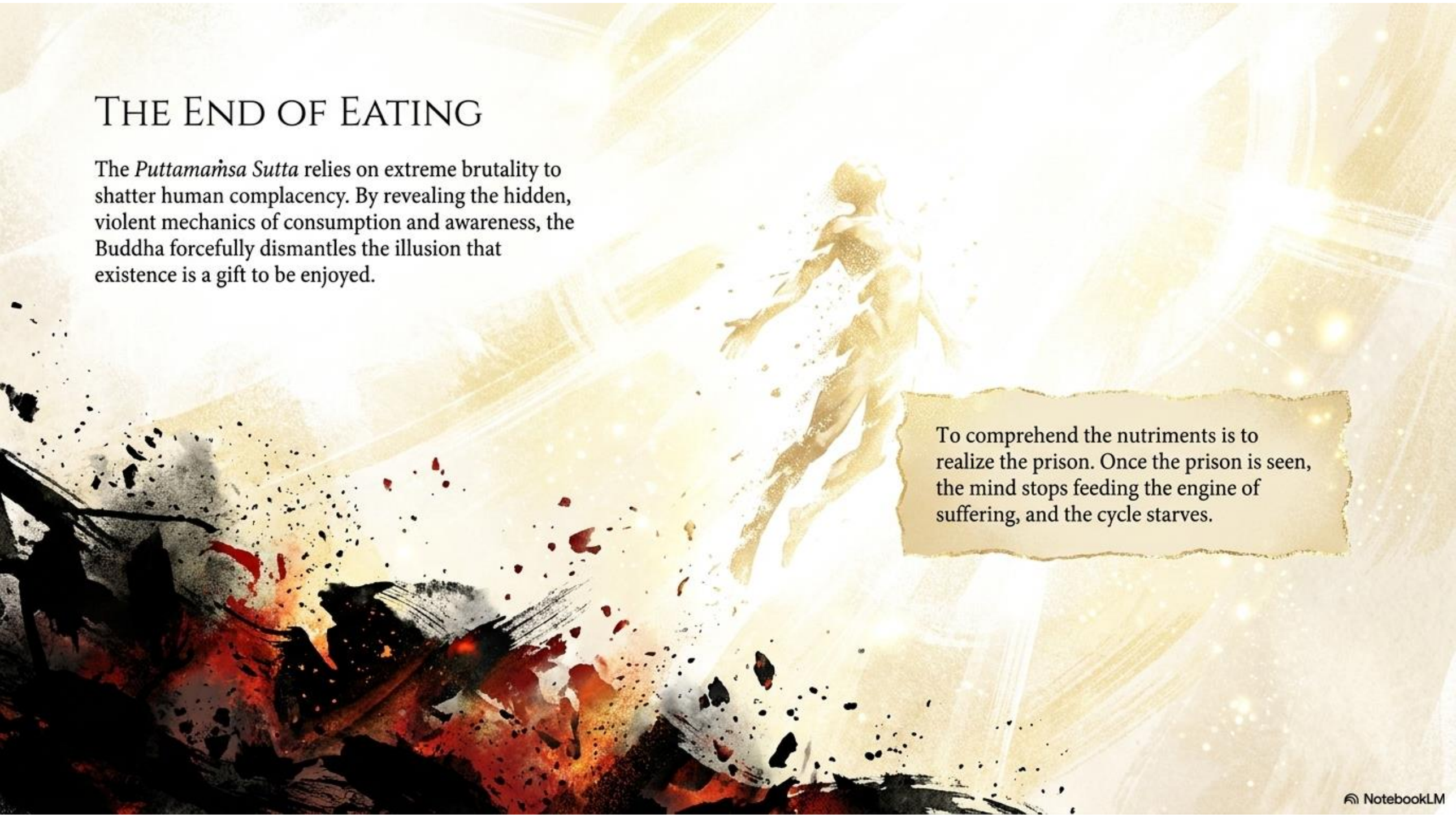
The End of Eating

The *Puttamaṁsa Sutta* relies on extreme brutality to shatter human complacency. By revealing the hidden, violent mechanics of consumption and awareness, the Buddha forcefully dismantles the illusion that existence is a gift to be enjoyed.



To comprehend the nutriments is to realize the prison. Once the prison is seen, the mind stops feeding the engine of suffering, and the cycle starves.

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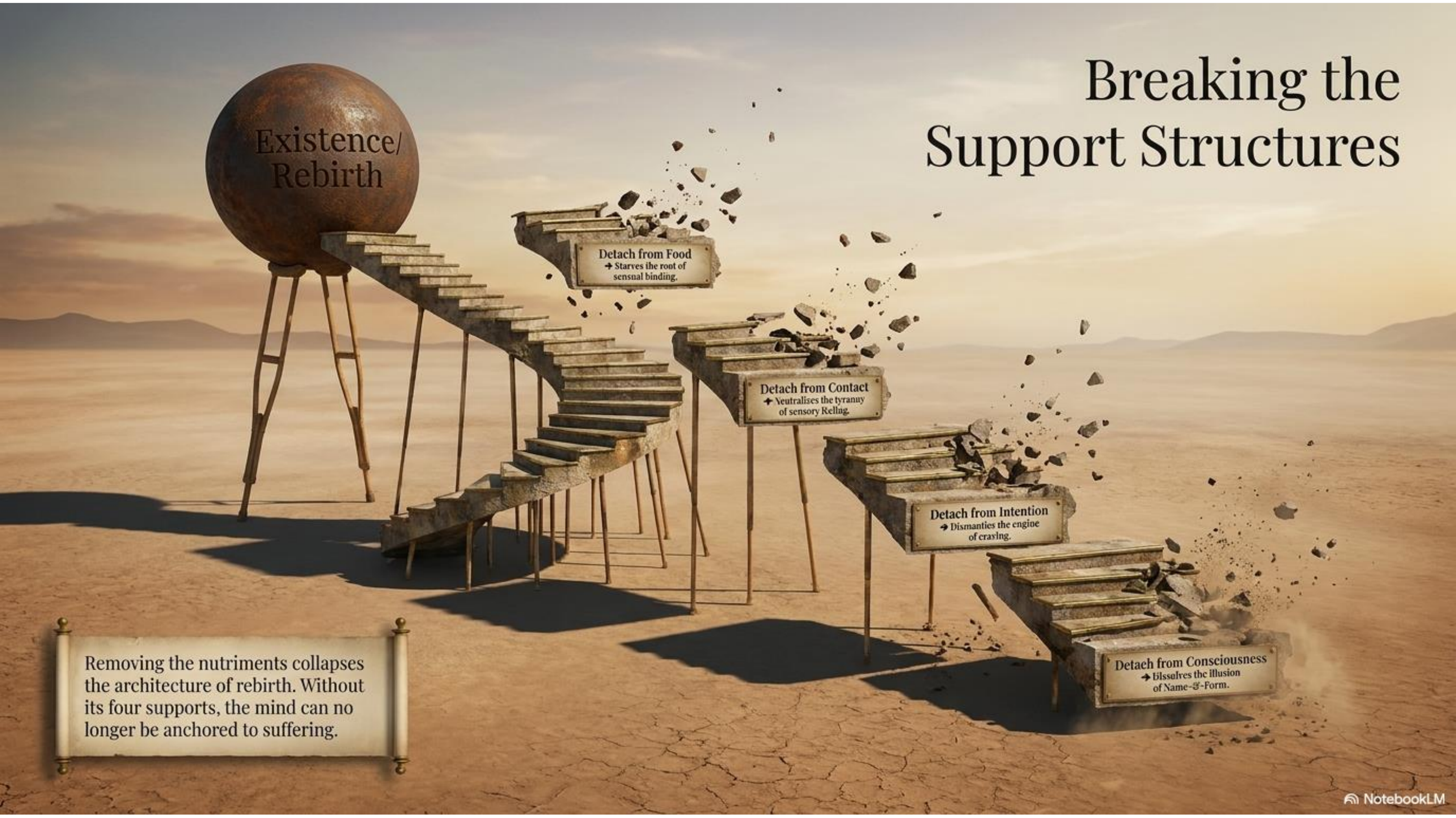
Breaking the Support Structures


Existence/ Rebirth
Detach from Food
→ Starves the root of sensual binding.
Detach from Contact
→ Neutralises the tyranny of sensory Relling.
Detach from Intention
→ Dismantles the engine of craving.
Detach from Consciousness
→ Dissolves the illusion of Name-&-Form.

Removing the nutriments collapses the architecture of rebirth. Without its four supports, the mind can no longer be anchored to suffering.

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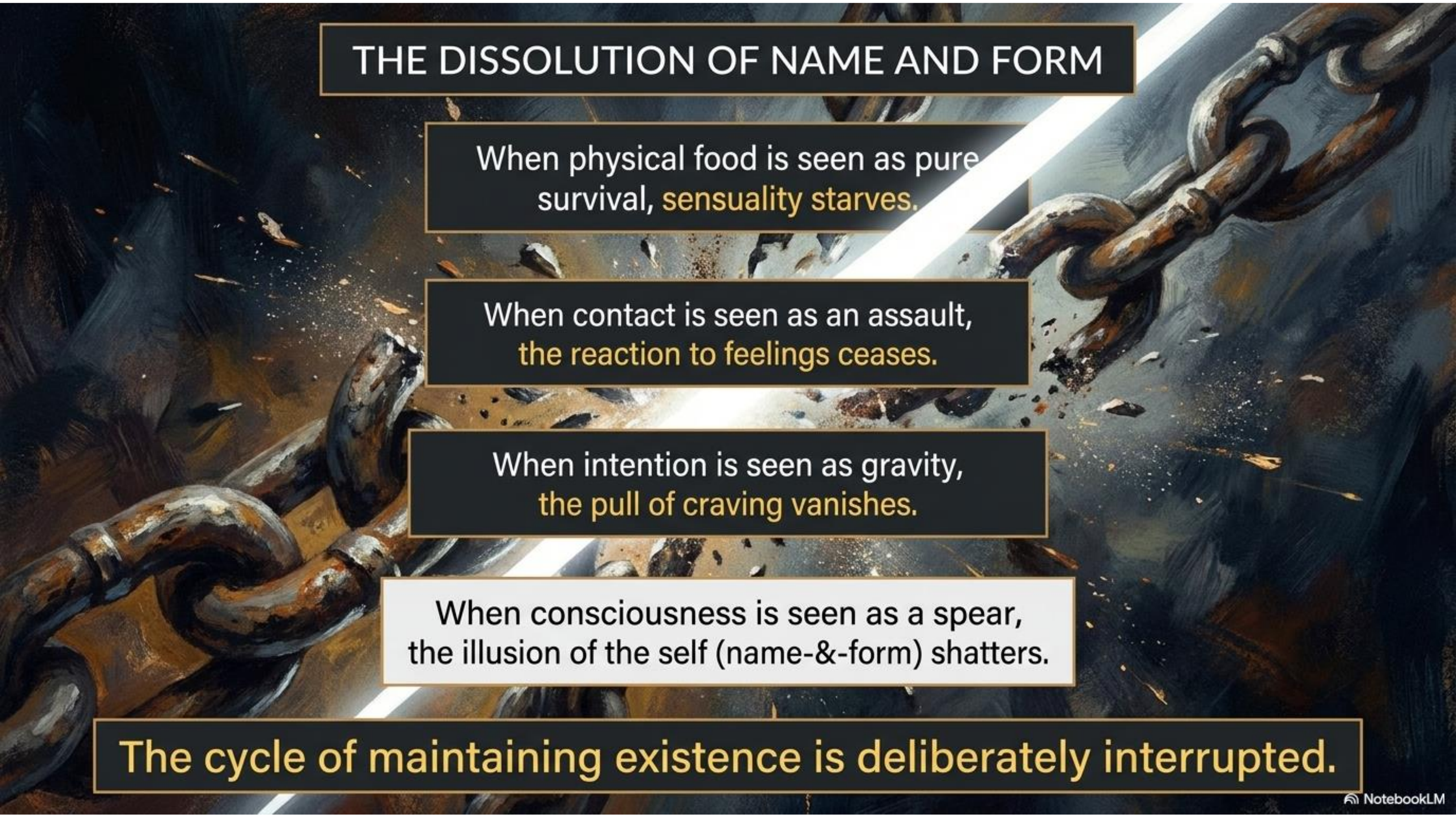
THE DISSOLUTION OF NAME AND FORM
When physical food is seen as pure survival, sensuality starves.
When contact is seen as an assault, the reaction to feelings ceases.
When intention is seen as gravity, the pull of craving vanishes.
When consciousness is seen as a spear, the illusion of the self (name-&-form) shatters.
The cycle of maintaining existence is deliberately interrupted.
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The Ultimate Cessation

By deeply comprehending the absolute nature of the four nutriments,
the disciple of the noble ones removes all supports for existence.
The desert is finally crossed.

When name-&-form is comprehended, I tell you, there is nothing further for a disciple of the noble ones to do.

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SEVER THE TETHER

When the nutriments are comprehended, there is nothing further for a disciple of the noble ones to do.

— Puttamaṁsa Sutta (SN 12:63)

Visual architecture inspired by the aesth NotebookLM